



CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

GUEST-STARRING:
DEADMAN

THE SWAMP THING HAS GONE **BERSERK--**

THE ONLY WAY I CAN SAVE THE CHALLENGERS IS BY **TAKING OVER PROF'S DECAYING BODY!**

BUCKLEY



CHALLENGERS of the UNKNOWN

CHAPTER 1

TO SAVE A MONSTER

THE FIRES ARE BURNING LOW NOW IN THE TOWN OF PERDITION, PENNSYLVANIA, BUT STILL THE CHALLENGERS STAND WATCHING, AS THOUGH PARALYZED BY HORROR--

--PERHAPS BY FEAR.

GUEST - STARRING
DEADMAN
&
SWAMP THING!

IN A STORY PROUDLY
PRODUCED BY:

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COLORIST

PROF IS ONE'A MY OLDEST BUDDIES IN THE WORLD... BUT HE'S DYING, AND MAYBE THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO.

FUNNY, ME AN EX-WRESTLER, I ALWAYS THOUGHT MUSCLES COULD SOLVE ANYTHING. BUT NOW... I FEEL SO USELESS, I COULD CRY!

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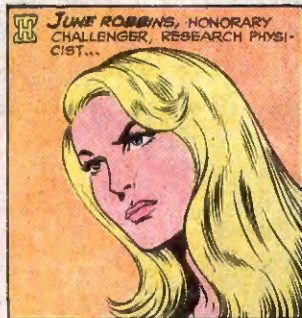
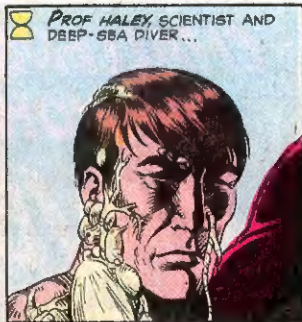
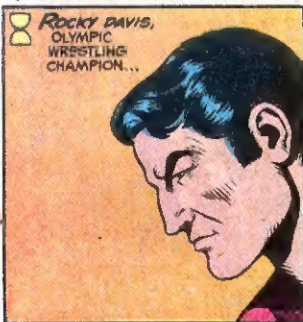
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THE CHALLENGERS--FOUR MEN WHO SURVIVED A FATAL ACCIDENT, AND NOW LIVE ON BORROWED TIME...



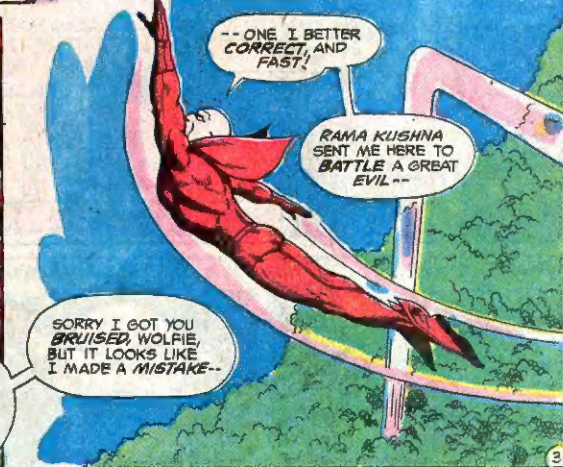
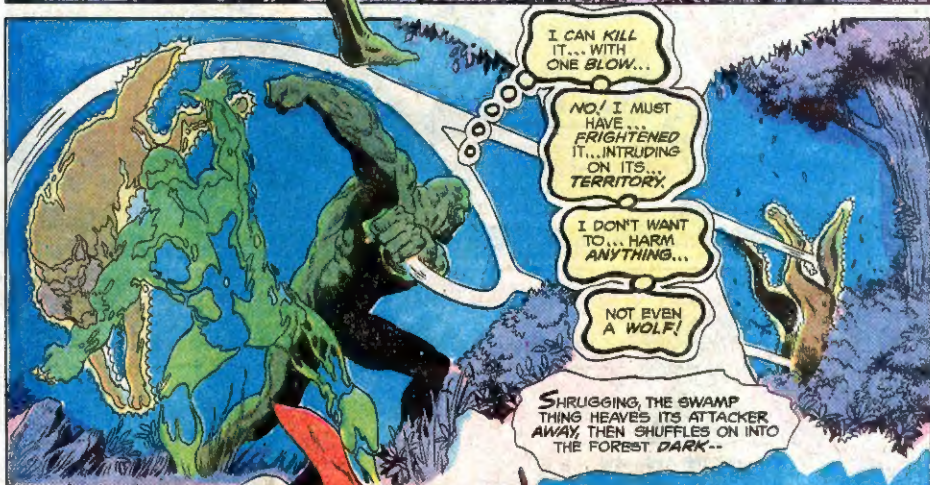
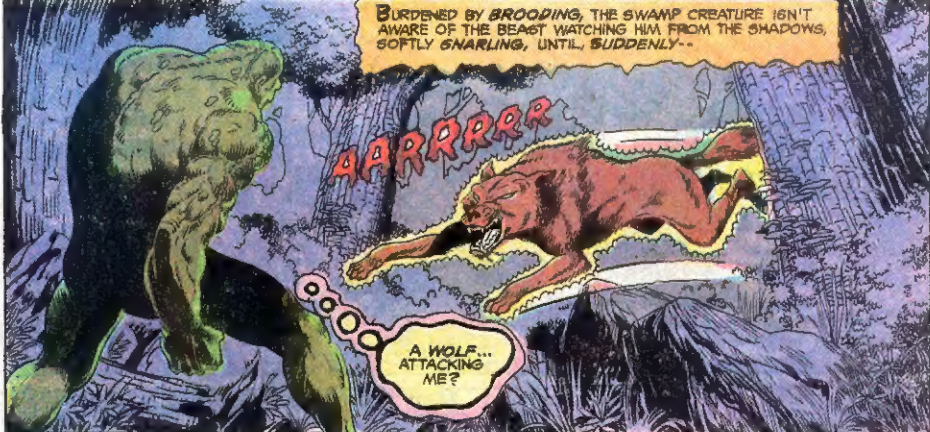
**YET THEY ARE NOT THE ONLY
WATCHERS OF THIS EVIL TOWN'S
DEATH...**

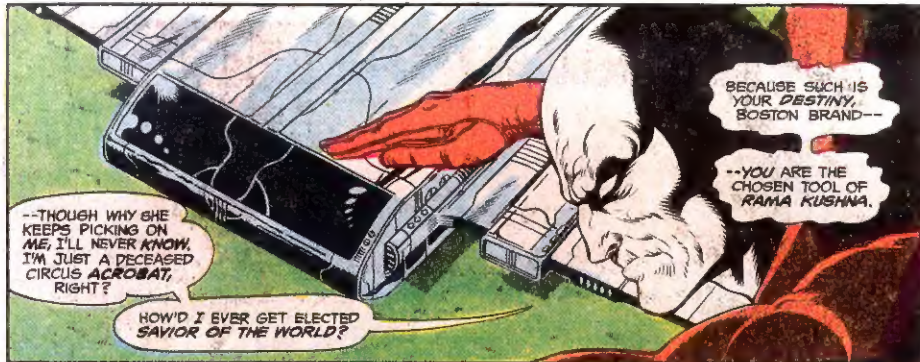


--THE SHAMBLING MOCKERY OF
A MAN WHO WAS ONCE **DOCTOR
ALEC HOLLAND--THE CREATURE
KNOWN AS--SWAMP THING**



BURDENED BY BROODING, THE SWAMP CREATURE ISN'T AWARE OF THE BEAST WATCHING HIM FROM THE SHADOWS, SOFTLY SNARLING, UNTIL, SUDDENLY--





BECAUSE SUCH IS
YOUR DESTINY,
BOSTON BRAND--

--YOU ARE THE
CHOSEN TOOL OF
RAMA KUSHNA.

--THOUGH WHY SHE
KEEPS PICKING ON
ME, I'LL NEVER KNOW.
I'M JUST A DECEASED
CIRCUS ACROBAT,
RIGHT?

HOW'D I EVER GET ELECTED
SAVIOR OF THE WORLD?

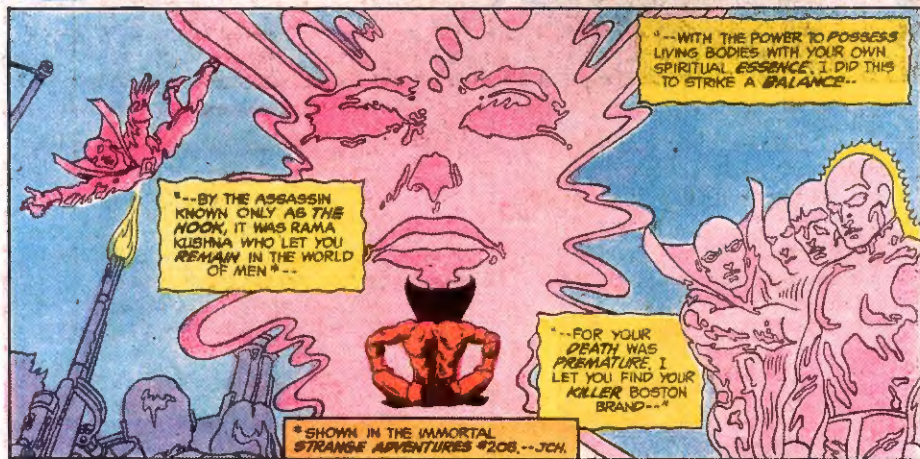


HUH? SO THERE YOU ARE, KUSH--
HANGING OUT IN A TREE!

I SENSE IRRITATION
IN YOUR TONE, BOSTON
BRAND. HAVE YOU
FORGOTTEN THAT IT
IS I WHO HAVE GIVEN
YOU CONTINUED
EXISTENCE ON EARTH?

YOU SENT ME HERE,
REMEMBER? "TO BALANCE
A THREATENING EVIL WITH
YOUR GOOD"--THOSE WERE
YOUR WORDS, JACK!

WHEN YOU WERE SLAIN,
THOSE LONG MONTHS AGO--



--WITH THE POWER TO POSSESS
LIVING BODIES WITH YOUR OWN
SPIRITUAL ESSENCE, I DID THIS
TO STRIKE A BALANCE--

"--BY THE ASSASSIN
KNOWN ONLY AS THE
HOOK, IT WAS RAMA
KUSHNA WHO LET YOU
REMAIN IN THE WORLD
OF MEN"--

--FOR YOUR
DEATH WAS
PREMATURE, I
LET YOU FIND YOUR
KILLER BOSTON
BRAND--"

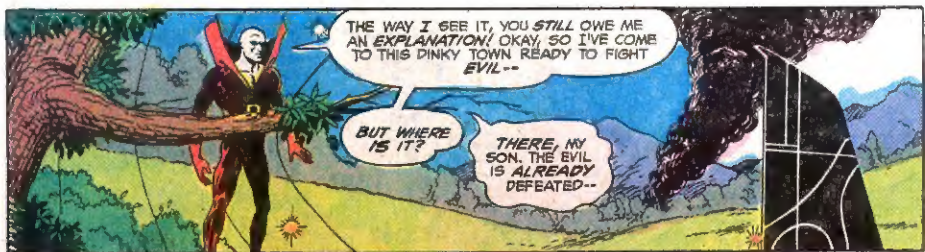
* SHOWN IN THE IMMORTAL
STRANGE ADVENTURES #208.--JCH.



--AND IN RETURN, I ASK ONLY THAT YOU HELP ME MAINTAIN THE BALANCE OF GOOD AND EVIL.

A FAIR
BARGAIN...

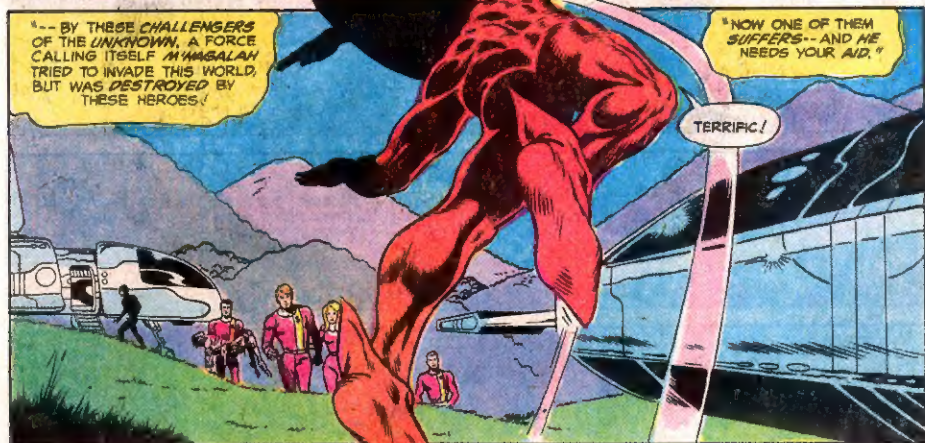
SURE, PAL--BUT
YOU DIDN'T ASK
ME, I ASKED
YOU. YOU WERE
READY TO RETIRE
ME TO NANDY
PARBAT--WHAT
I'D CALL NEAVEN--
REMEMBER?



THE WAY I SEE IT, YOU STILL OWE ME AN EXPLANATION! OKAY, SO I'VE COME TO THIS DINKY TOWN READY TO FIGHT EVIL--

BUT WHERE IS IT?

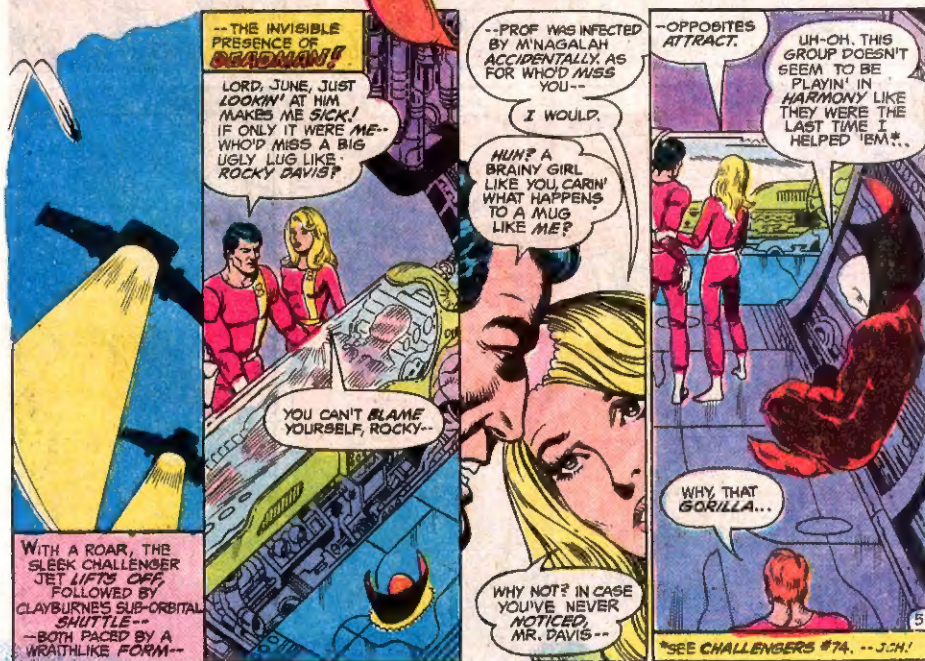
THERE, MY SON-- THE EVIL IS ALREADY DEFEATED--



-- BY THESE CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN, A FORCE CALLING ITSELF M'NAGALAH TRIED TO INVADE THIS WORLD, BUT WAS DESTROYED BY THESE HEROES!

"NOW ONE OF THEM SUFFERS-- AND HE NEEDS YOUR AID."

TERRIFIC!



--THE INVISIBLE PRESENCE OF **SEADMAN!**

LORD, JUNE, JUST LOOKIN' AT HIM MAKES ME SICK! IF ONLY IT WERE ME-- WHO'D MISS A BIG UGLY LUG LIKE ROCKY DAVIS?

YOU CAN'T BLAME YOURSELF, ROCKY--

--PROF WAS INFECTED BY M'NAGALAH ACCIDENTALLY, AS FOR WHO'D MISS YOU--

I WOULD.

HUH? A BRAINY GIRL LIKE YOU, CARIN' WHAT HAPPENS TO A MUG LIKE ME?

WHY NOT? IN CASE YOU'VE NEVER NOTICED, MR. DAVIS--

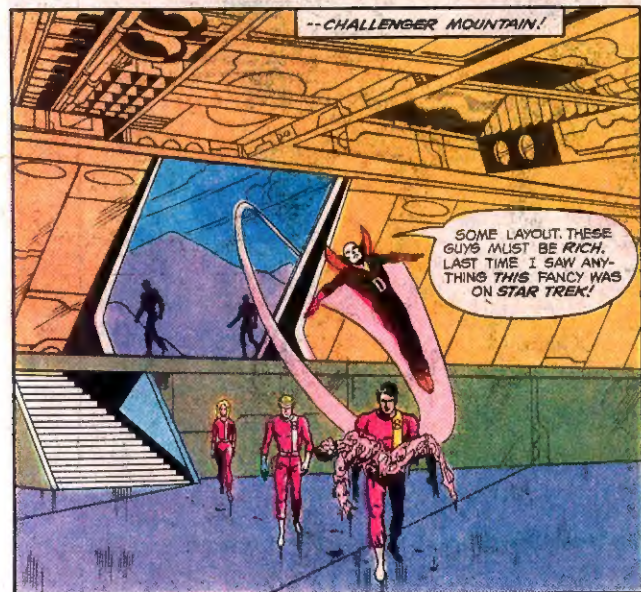
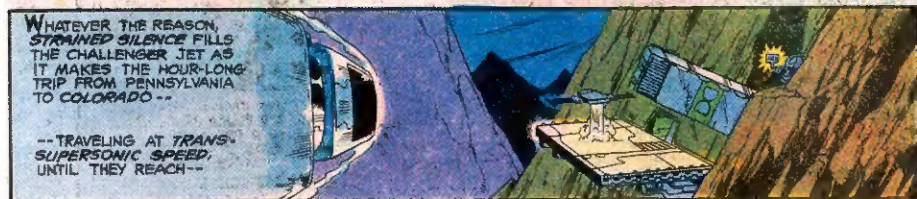
--OPPOSITES ATTRACT.

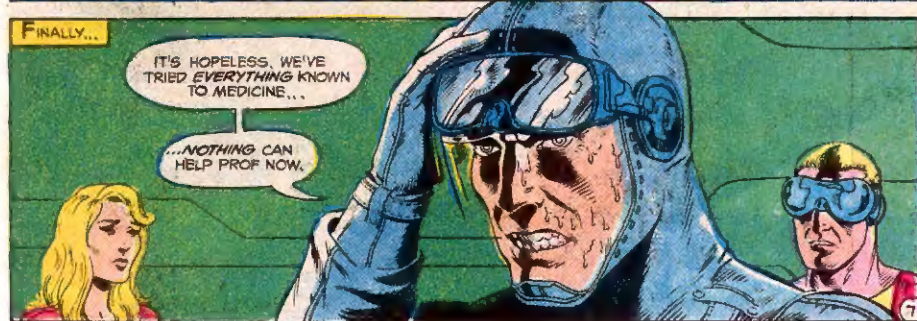
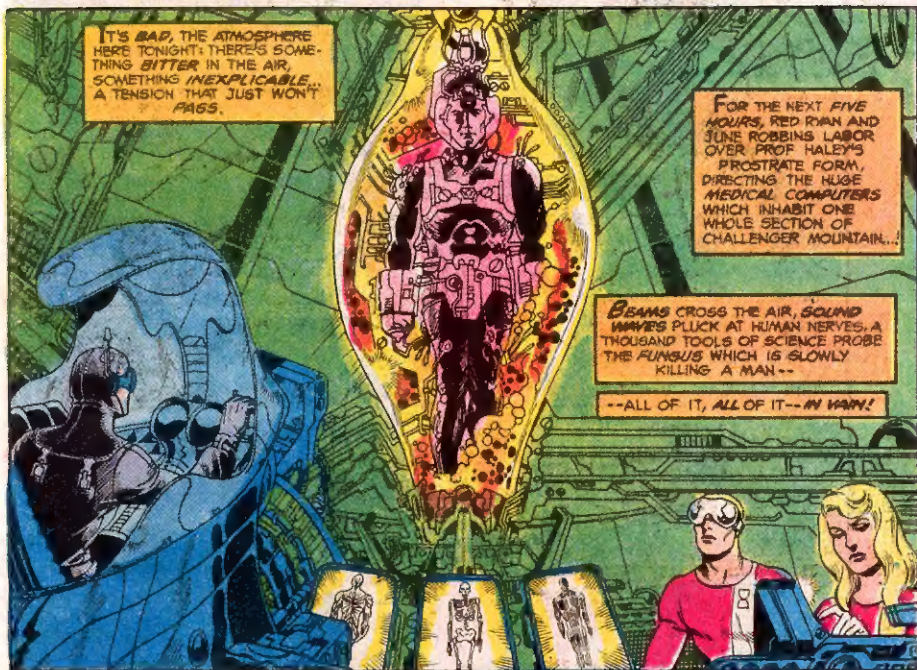
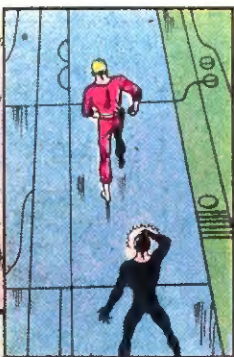
UH-OH, THIS GROUP DOESN'T SEEM TO BE PLAYIN' IN HARMONY LIKE THEY WERE THE LAST TIME I HELPED 'EM...

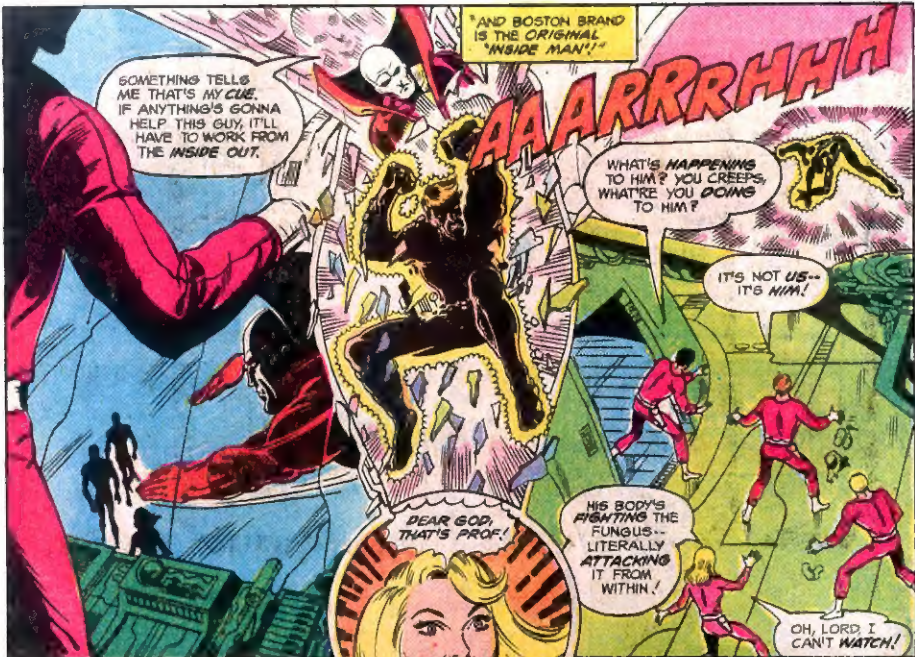
WHY, THAT GORILLA...

WITH A ROAR, THE SLEEK CHALLENGER JET LIFTS OFF, FOLLOWED BY CLAYBURN'S SUB-ORBITAL SHUTTLE-- BOTH PACED BY A WRATHLIKE FORM--

"SEE CHALLENGERS #74. --J.C.H."







AND AS A WEARY IMPATH PASSES
INTO THE GHOSTLY EQUIVALENT OF
EXHAUSTED UNCONSCIOUSNESS--

-- AND THREE MEN TRY FUTILELY NOT TO JOIN JUNE ROBBINS IN TEARS--



-- WE'LL LEAP AHEAD
SEVERAL HOURS, TO DAWN
OF THE FOLLOWING DAY,
WHEN WE FIND--

PROF! MAN, DO YOU LOOK GOOD!

I FEEL GOOD, ROCKY.
JUNE TOLD ME WHAT
HAPPENED BACK IN
PERDITION--

-- ALL EXCEPT WHAT HAPPENED TO
THE MAN WHO HELPED SAVE MY
LIFE BACK THERE-- DOCTOR
ALEC HOLLAND.

-- WHERE THE CHALLENGERS
LEARN WHAT CLAYBURNE
DISCOVERED TWENTY-FOUR
HOURS BEFORE!--

HUH? WHO?

LORD IN HEAVEN!
THAT STRANGE
SWAMP THING WE
SAW IN PERDITION--

THAT WAS
ALEC HOLLAND!

WHAT FOLLOWS IS EXPLANATION AND
HURRIED RESEARCH THROUGH THE
CHALLENGER FILES, TIED-IN TO
GOVERNMENT COMPUTERS--

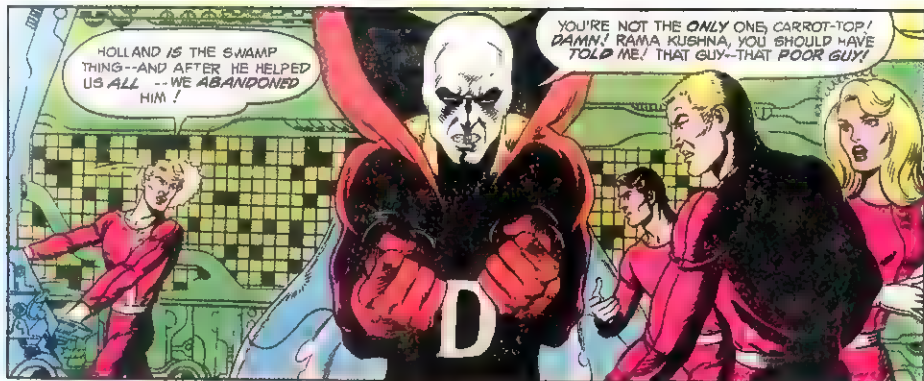
-- WAS CAUGHT
IN AN EXPLOSION--

APPARENTLY,
MONTHS AGO, HE
WAS WORKING ON
A BIO-RESTORATIVE
FORMULA--

-- AND WAS TRANSFORMED
INTO A CREATURE HALF-MAN,
HALF-MONSTER!*

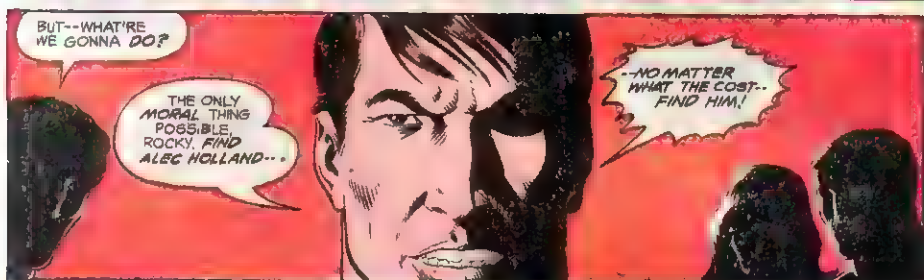
* LAST ISSUE, OUR TIME. -- JCH.

* SEE THE ORIGINAL SWAMP THING SAGA. -- JCH.



HOLLAND IS THE SWAMP
THING--AND AFTER HE HELPED
US ALL --WE ABANDONED
HIM!

YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE, CARROT-TOP!
DAMN! RAMA KUSHNA, YOU SHOULD HAVE
TOLD ME! THAT GUY--THAT POOR GUY!



BUT--WHAT'RE
WE GONNA DO?

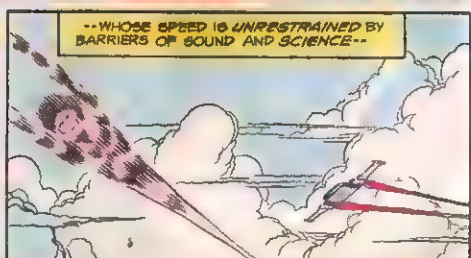
THE ONLY
MORAL THING
POSSIBLE,
ROCKY, FIND
ALEX HOLLAND--

--NO MATTER
WHAT THE COST--
FIND HIM!

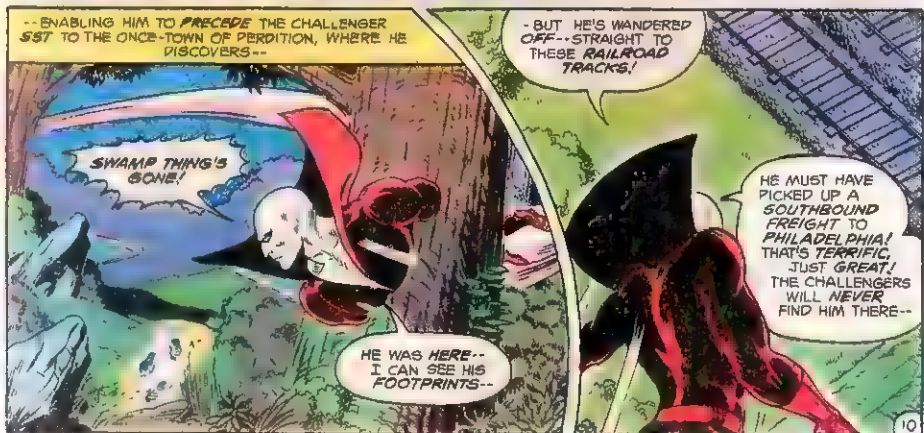


WITHIN MOMENTS, A JET STREAKS EASTWARD--

--ACCOMPANIED BY AN UNSEEN GHOST--



--WHOSE SPEED IS UNRESTRAINED BY
BARRIERS OF SOUND AND SCIENCE--



--ENABLING HIM TO PRECEDE THE CHALLENGER
557 TO THE ONCE-TOWN OF PERDITION, WHERE HE
DISCOVERS--

SWAMP THING'S
GONE!

HE WAS HERE--
I CAN SEE HIS
FOOTPRINTS--

-BUT HE'S WANDERED
OFF--STRAIGHT TO
THESE RAILROAD
TRACKS!

HE MUST HAVE
PICKED UP A
SOUTHBOUND
FREIGHT TO
PHILADELPHIA!
THAT'S TERRIFIC!
JUST GREAT!
THE CHALLENGERS
WILL NEVER
FIND HIM THERE--



--BUT MAYBE A DEADMAN CAN!

PHILADELPHIA: THE CITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE WHERE MEN WROTE A DECLARATION TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO, AND STAYED TO FIGHT A WAR AND DRAFT A CONSTITUTION...

IT'S A QUIET CITY--

--BUT THIS EVENING, THAT QUIET WILL BE RUDELY SHATTERED!



I'VE CRISSCROSSED THIS BURG FROM VET STADIUM TO THE ART MUSEUM, BUT SO FAR I'VE DRAWN ZIP.

ANOTHER HOUR LIKE THIS AND I'LL -- BH? IN THAT ALLEY--

COMICS for COLLECTORS



IT'S THE SWAMP THING



SMART MAN, HIDING TILL THE SUN SETS! WELL, DON'T FRET, PAL! LET ME TAKE OVER THAT BOD OF YOURS, AND I'LL LEAD YOU STRAIGHT TO THE CHALLENGERS--



--AND LET THEM DO WHAT--

YAAAAAAAAA!

WAVES OF ABOY SEND
DEADMAN SPINNING BACKWARD,
AND THEN...

WHAT HIT ME?
I NEVER FELT
ANYTHING LIKE
THAT BEFORE--
EVER!

IT WAS LIKE
GLAMMING INTO
A BRICK WALL...

A WALL... INSIDE
OF THE SWAMP
THING?

AS THOUGH IN
ANSWER, THE
MAN-MONSTER
TURNS--

OH MY GOD!
NO WONDER
I COULDN'T
ENTER HIM...
HE'S POSSESSED!

SOMEONE'S
ALREADY
INSIDE!

NO WAY I CAN HANDLE
THIS SWAMP ALONE! I NEED
PHYSICAL HELP!

--AND THAT MEANS
THE CHALLENGERS!

MEANWHILE, IN PERDITION...

WE'VE BEEN HERE ALMOST
AN HOUR... AND WE'VE
FOUND NOTHING.

MIGHT AS WELL FACE
IT, SWAMP THING IS GONE.
WE BLEW IT--

--NO THANKS TO THAT
BABOON CLAYBURNE,
IF HE'D ONLY TOLD US
ABOUT HOLLAND WHILE
WE WERE STILL HERE--
BUT, NO--

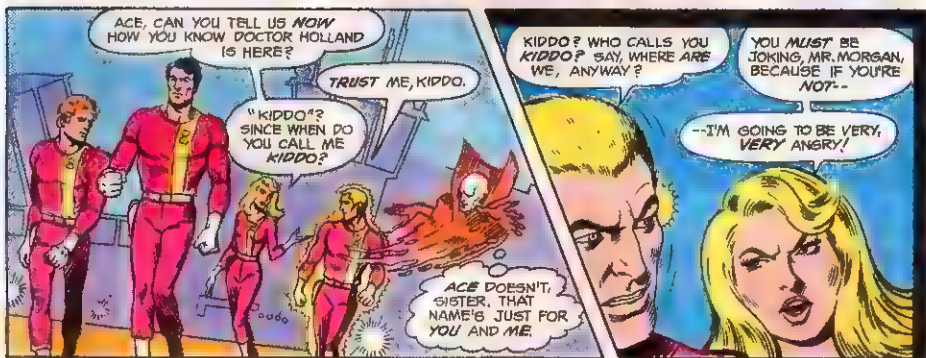
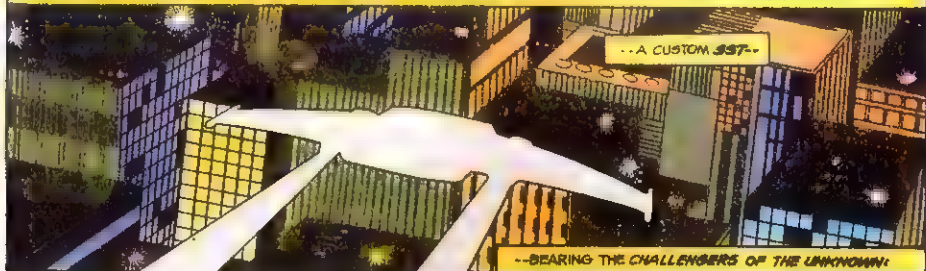
ALL CLAYBURNE
EVER THINKS
ABOUT IS NUMBER
ONE. JUST LIKE
ROCKY.

EH? ACE LOOKS
KINDA QUEASY.
HOPE HE'S NOT
SICK OR--

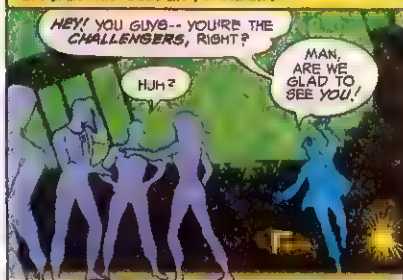
GUYS, NO TIME TO
EXPLAIN-- BUT I
KNOW WHERE SWAMP
THING'S RUN OFF TO!

HE'S IN PHILLY--
AND HE'S GOT
TROUBLE!

NIGHT COMES TO PHILADELPHIA AS IT COMES TO ALL CITIES BUT THIS NIGHT, SOMETHING ELSE COMES TO THE CITY OF LOVE--



AND, AS A BEWILDERED ACE MORGAN TRIES TO EXPLAIN HIS SUDDEN AMNESIA--



AT THAT MOMENT, IN THE STATE ASYLUM--

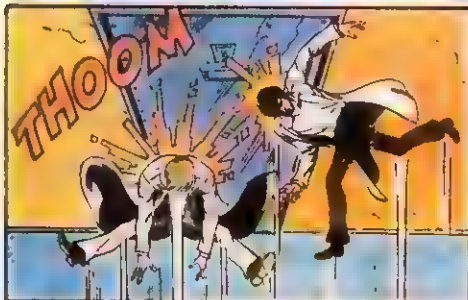




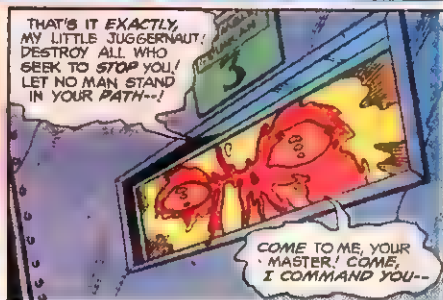
OH, I'M GONNA REGRET THIS IN THE MORNING!

JUST SHUT UP AND DO IT! WHAT DO YOU THINK WE'RE GETTING PAID FOR--KNITTING?

YAAAAAHHHHH!

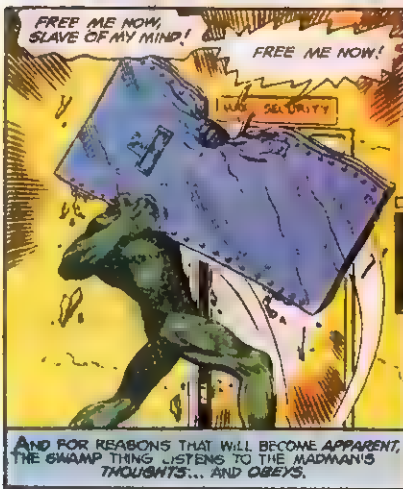


THOOM



THAT'S IT EXACTLY, MY LITTLE JUGGERNAUT! DESTROY ALL WHO SEEK TO STOP YOU! LET NO MAN STAND IN YOUR PATH--!

COME TO ME, YOUR MASTER! COME, I COMMAND YOU--



FREE ME NOW, SLAVE OF MY MIND!

FREE ME NOW!

WAS SECURITY

AND FOR REASONS THAT WILL BECOME APPARENT, THE SWAMP THING LISTENS TO THE MADMAN'S THOUGHTS... AND OBEYS.



JUST THEN, FOR THE SAKE OF IRONY--

HOLY HANNAH, WE GOT HERE RIGHT IN TIME!

THAT MAN-- IS THAT WHO I THINK IT IS?

IT'S HIM! SWAMP THING-- AND WITH HIM--

--DUNCAN PRAMBLE, MULTI-MAN!*

YOU! HOW GOOD OF YOU TO COME, CHALLENGERS! HOW GOOD OF YOU TO MAKE MY ESCAPE A TOTAL VICTORY!

MULTI-MAN--WHO DRANK A STOLEN WIZARD'S FORMULA OF LIQUID LIGHT, GIVING HIM IMMORTALITY--

*LAST SEEN IN CHALLENGERS #81--JCH

--THE ABILITY TO BE REBORN EACH TIME HE DIED, IN A NEW BODY--WITH NEW, ARCAIC POWERS!

THE LAST TIME HE DIED--WE THOUGHT HE WAS REBORN AS A NORMAL MAN!

AND WE'VE GOT TO STOP HIM!

YOU MAY TRY, ROCKY DAVIS! YOUR WRESTLER'S STRENGTH WILL BE WORTHLESS--

AND YOU WILL FAIL--OR DIE!

AS YOU CAN SEE, MY LAST TRANSFORMATION DID NOT LEAVE ME POWERLESS!

I'VE GAINED A TALENT FOR TELEPATHY, AND USING THAT TALENT--

AAAH! HE'S--CRUSHING--ME!

--I'VE TAKEN COMPLETE CONTROL OVER THIS MONSTER. I DISCOVERED WHILE MENTALLY OBSERVING YOUR RECENT EXPLOITS!

HE IS MINE TO COMMAND! TOGETHER, WE WILL RULE MANHATTAN!

GUYS, YOU'VE GOTTA DO SOMETHING!
HE'LL KILL ROCKY--AND THE BIG
LUMP REMINDS ME OF MY BROTHER
CLEVE!

YOU CAN'T
LET HIM DIE--
I'LL HAUNT
YOU FOREVER!

IT'S NO USE,
ACE! SWAMP
THING DOESN'T
EVEN FEEL US!

IF ONLY THERE WERE
SOME WAY TO SHORT
CIRCUIT THE
TELEPATHIC LINK
BETWEEN PRAMBLE
AND DOCTOR HOLLAND--
LIKE YOU'D SHORT A
COMPUTER CIRCUIT!

THAT'S
ROCKY'S ONLY
CHANCE--

AND IT'S
IMPOSSIBLE!

FOR YOU PHYSICAL GUYS, MAYBE
IT IS, BUT FOR A DEADMAN--?

I'VE HAD MY SHOT
AT LIFE! SO HERE
GOES NOTHING--



--'CAUSE A GHOST
CAN'T DIE--

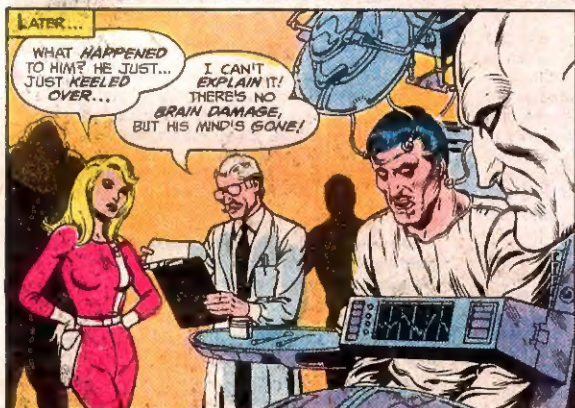
CAN HE?

UHM?





WELL, WHADDAYA KNOW...
I SURVIVED.

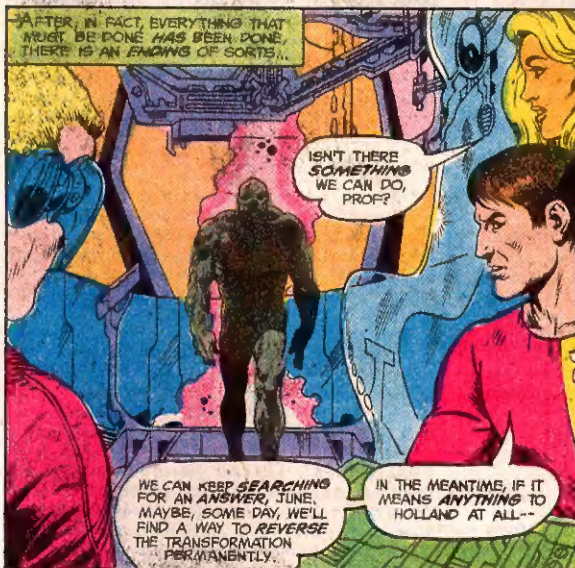


LATER...

WHAT HAPPENED
TO HIM? HE JUST...
JUST KEELER
OVER...

I CAN'T
EXPLAIN IT!
THERE'S NO
BRAIN DAMAGE,
BUT HIS MIND'S GONE!

AFTERWARD, AFTER DUNCAN PRAMBLE HAS
BEEN SAFELY TUCKED AWAY IN A HOSPITAL
WARD, AFTER THE CHALLENGERS HAVE
RETURNED TO COLORADO, AFTER SWAMP
THING HAS BEEN TESTED IN THE
CHALLENGER LAB...



AFTER, IN FACT, EVERYTHING THAT
MIGHT BE DONE HAS BEEN DONE.
THERE IS AN ENDING OF SORTS...

ISN'T THERE
SOMETHING
WE CAN DO,
PROF?

WE CAN KEEP SEARCHING
FOR AN ANSWER, JUNE,
MAYBE, SOME DAY, WE'LL
FIND A WAY TO REVERSE
THE TRANSFORMATION
PERMANENTLY.

IN THE MEANTIME, IF IT
MEANS ANYTHING TO
HOLLAND AT ALL--



--HE CAN CONSIDER
CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN
HIS HOME.

IT MEANS SOMETHING,
PROFESSOR HALEY, IT
MEANS A GREAT DEAL.

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS
EXISTENCE, THE SWAMP THING
IS NO LONGER ALONE...

COMING
NEXT
ISSUE:

REINTRODUCING ONE OF THE
GREAT HEROES OF
YESTERYEAR--

Reintroducing
TIME MASTER



Dear Editor,

You know, for anyone who's been reading the **Challengers** since their inception (1958), you'd think that to maintain their interest, this book would have to be more grown up. Well, you've succeeded!

What constitutes a mature and even more credible comic book? Well, first it must have depth, which is shown in the degree of character development in each of the main characters. Each of the four **Challengers** are well defined in their specific talents, drawbacks and personalities. They also know their place in regard to each other. This makes for a very cohesive unit. Even June's appearance throws a kind of sub-plot action in to the story with her desire to be more than an honorary **Challenger**. This helps intensify the human emotions denoted in the story line.

This depth (from nearly 20 years of experience in character development), plus the story lines of "hocus-pocus" and "sci-fi," are a perfect "marriage" within **Challenger** framework. This also brings me to my second point concerning the intricacies of future stories.

Here you have a main plot, a fullness of story. Intertwined within that plot are character inter-involvement, sidelights and the beginnings of points that can be used for future stories. Added with the realistic twists of mistaken success, your adventurers are classy examples of writing and editing.

Last and certainly not least, is the artwork, which again maintains the depth of the characters and storylines. Such artwork makes this comic excitingly alive in an exceptionally vivid and flowing manner.

Keep up the good work and remember that it's quality that counts. This comic has it!

Michael Iannico
1430 Greenpoint Rd.
Far Rockaway, N.Y. 11691

The **CHALLENGERS** pose many different "challenges" for their writers. However, as you've pointed out, the different skills, personalities and subject matter made available by the mere **CONCEPT** of these four men battling unknown dangers makes the task a bit easier. We hope you enjoy the addition of **SWAMP THING** and **DEADMAN** this issue. We felt that even **WITH** all the potential material on hand, little extra-special "punch" in your imagination wouldn't hurt.—JCH

Dear Editor,

I picked up **CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN** #81 at the store and didn't know what to expect. I hadn't seen the **COTU** in a long time. In fact, it's been quite some time since I've been a regular comic reader. But #81 caught my eye!

The art by Mike Nasser was excellent and his style superb. I saw many influences within his work, the most

prominent was that of Neal Adams. Nasser is a definite must for the success for the **Challengers**.

Gerry Conway never fails to write an excellent story and "Multi-Man's Master Plan" was one of them. The flashbacks neatly informed me of the stories I had missed.

I like the idea of the new honorary **Challenger**, June Robbins. Wasn't she in the old **Challengers** mag? Nasser draws her exquisitely. Why not see if you can scrounge up some money and put Adams and Nasser together in an issue. It would be fantastic! I wish the **Challengers** much success!

Chris J. Bonno
320 W. Bell
Houston Tex. 77019

We won't say how much Mike Nasser is influenced by Neal Adams, but **TIME** was one of the factors that made it necessary to get Keith Giffin and John Celardo to fill in for these two issues. At this writing, we believe Mike will be back next issue. In the meantime, let's give a collective congratulations to Keith and John for their fine efforts here and last issue.

By the way, **MONEY** is not the reason free-lancer Neal Adams is not seen except on DC covers. Neal's comic book work is only a small portion of his many interests. He also produces magazine illustrations, movie posters, paperback book covers and advertising art for clients all over this and other countries. We'd love for him to do comic work exclusively, but Neal is much too diverse a talent to concentrate in a single medium. If you're a Adams fan, look around in other places besides comics—he's everywhere!—JCH

Let it never be said that we're not ones to admit we've made a mistake. When the time came around to think up a name for this page, we found that we'd put it off for too long. We had to come up with a letter column title in just a few minutes and the hasty result is on top. Many of the letters we've received stated that they did not like the title **CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN MAIL ROOM**.

Okay! We admit defeat! But we're not going to let you get away with it that easily! So, continue on to the following announcement:

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT: We're holding a contest! Think up a name for the **CHALLENGERS'** letters page, **PRINT IT ON A POSTCARD** and mail it to: **CHALLENGERS LETTER PAGE CONTEST, DC Comics, Inc. 75 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10019.** Cards must be postmarked before November 20, 1977. Winning entry will be selected by the editor. The winner will be notified by mail and his or her name and address will be printed in the first column bearing the new name. Please **DO NOT** send drawings. One of our staff artists will supply the artwork based on your title.

The winner will be awarded a special prize to be announced next issue!

A few weeks ago, my local drugstore engaged me in friendly conversation.

"Are you still putting out that kids' magazine?" he asked.

"No," I replied. "I'm now the publisher of DC Comics. You know—*Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman*."

"Of course!" he exclaimed, brightening visibly. "Why, that must be a wonderful job."

I thought about the conversation afterwards. It was one I'd had many times before. Whenever anyone seemed baffled as to what DC Comics really meant, I could dispel his or her doubts instantly by uttering the illuminating incantation: "You know, *Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman*."

The truth, I reflected, is that to almost everybody (except millions of dedicated readers) the super-heroes are the comic books. But what about *G.I. Combat, Sgt. Rock, Unknown Soldier, and Men of War*? And what about the mystery books—*Ghosts, Witching Hour, Secrets of the Haunted House, The Unexpected, House of Secrets and House of Mystery*?

Here we were, eagerly at work expanding our mystery line-up. Not only were we reviving such spectral luminaries as *Deadman* and the *Phantom Stranger* for the fall, or launching a *Ghosts Special* for September, or planning a novel-length thriller to celebrate *House of Secrets* #150, but we were rubbing our hands together over the way a wholly new mystery title, *Doorway To Nightmare*, was shaping up for its debut in October. And, as usual, all of these books were involving some of our most extraordinary talent: Berni Wrightson, Mike Kaluta, David Michellie, Gerry Conway, Michael

★ DC ★ Publishorial ★ it's a mystery...

Fleisher, Marty Pasko, among others.

There is no doubt that mystery books hold a fascination for readers and creators alike. There are fewer constraints than in other genres and therefore many more surprises. No costumed super-hero delimits a cover idea by his requisite appearance. No story is bound, except by the writer's own choices, to any place or time, to certain obligatory backgrounds, or to equally obligatory supporting characters. A writer of capable imagination can fashion a story from whole cloth. An artist, unrestrained by the visual conventions which must be followed in any super-hero book, can make his drawing as highly stylized or deeply personal as he might wish.

But the real appeal of the mystery books must lie in the vividly human characterizations that are essential to the form. Interestingly, both the super-hero books and the mysteries derive their very existence from an ongoing clash between good and evil. But the clash in super-hero books is mythic. Not only are the super-heroes larger than life, but so also are their foes (How could they be otherwise?). The super-heroes are beings who in our dreams we might like to be but never can, for they are supra-human not only in physical prowess but in moral strength as well.

On the other hand, the central characters in a mystery tale can be the people next door. Their emotions are not ones that we necessarily would like to have, but in our more honest moments must admit to. The mystery figures are prey to arrogance, jealousy, self-delusion, treachery, and guilt. When violence erupts, it is not cosmic but alarmingly commonplace.

Often, yearning for super powers to catapult themselves out of their very humanness, the mystery characters will invoke the occult. But ultimately, the same human limitations they have sought to overcome entrap them in an even more wretched downfall. The mystery tales can jolt us in a way the super-hero sagas can't, for they touch not on our noblest aspirations but on our basest impulses.

Of course, the stories are to some extent determined by the Comics Code which dictates that no crime can go unpunished. Naturally, this can be gratifying, reaffirming our sense of right and wrong and restoring order just as the super-hero comics do.

But some of the best mystery stories are those that reek of evil-doing not punishable by law, where all the ends are not neatly tied up and the reader is not let off the hook.

In addition to the unfettered storytelling that characterizes both the writing and the art, the mystery books present us with compelling and oft-times devastating metaphors for our existence, if you've been looked into super-hero books, you ought to give mysteries a shot. The creativity is there, and so is the power.

Wishing you all the best—

Jenette

It's no secret that the majority of people entering the comic book field over the past several years have come from the ranks of comics fandom. Indeed, there have been particular pockets across the nation where friendly fans graduated en masse to professional status—Detroit, New York, Indianapolis, ...

Bob Layton was part of the Indianapolis crowd, but unlike fellow fans Roger Stern, Roger Sifler, and Duffy Vohland, Bob's activities weren't restricted to the writing and drawing of amateur comics—Mr. Layton's alternate identity was that of the most feared of all fans, the comics dealer.

Not to say he didn't participate in the more acceptable activities. Bob worked on the various CPL Gang fan publications, joining with such greats

dc profiles 23 number bob layton

as Joe Staton and John Byrne. It was through this work that Bob met Frank McLaughlin, the man who helped Bob break into the business.

Layton spent the better part of a year working as McLaughlin's assistant—doing backgrounds and the like on such features as *Batman, Justice League* and *The Flash*. Bob also did some work for the Charlton group.

In early 1976, Bob landed his first solo assignment at DC—inking *Claw* #9. From there, he went on to ink *The*

Legion of Super-Heroes and a number of features for Marvel. In the mid-summer of last year, Bob got the opportunity of a lifetime: assistant to Comics Master Wally Wood. This led to Bob's editing the tenth anniversary issue of *Witzend*.

After Bob's stint with Woody, he teamed up with old friend Joe Staton to handle the art chores on *All-Star Comics*. He recently added the *Star Hunters* inking assignment.

"Many people become inkers, believing they merely follow the lines the penciller puts down," Layton told *DC Profiles*. "This is untrue—there is a lot of drawing and embellishing involved in the inking process. There's quite a bit of opportunity to inject your own personality into the artwork—you really have to be a good penciller to be a good inker."

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